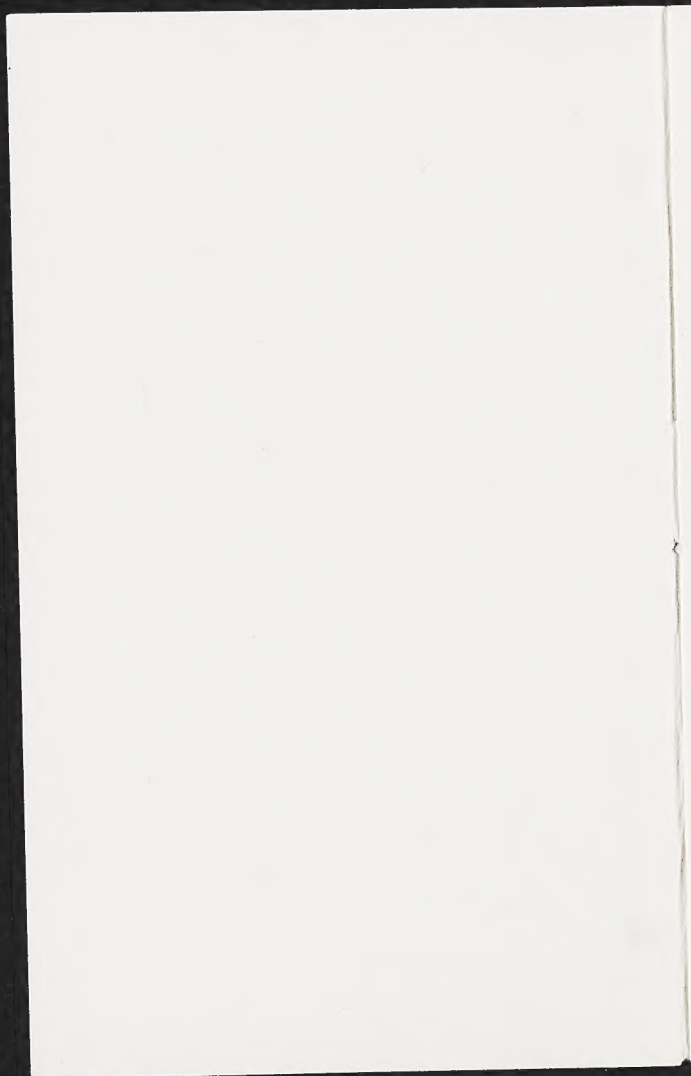


A Pilgrimage
to
Bread Loaf
Mountain





The name of Bread Loaf Mountain awakens curiosity, for loaves can be of many shapes and sizes, but the mountain itself, as seen from Lincoln Mountain one November day, twin-peaked and snow-capped, brought about a firm resolve to climb this peak at the first chance. As the only known route to its top was over the Long Trail from the Ripton-Hancock Pass, 10 miles at least, this mountain seemed out of the list of peaks which may be climbed in a day's trip from Burlington.

Light was shed, however, by a very interesting account of a trip up Bread Loaf Mountain which appeared in the "Vermont" during the winter of 1915. It was learned that a trail had been cut to the summit of Bread Loaf Mountain by Homer R. Noble of Ripton, aided by Professor H. Collitz of Johns Hopkins University, in the summer of 1912. A correspondence with Mr. Noble not only brought forth a map of the new trail, but an invitation to join him in a trip up the mountain. Through later developments, the annual meeting of the Green Mountain Club was appointed for July 5, at Bread Loaf Inn. A small party from Burlington decided to take advantage of this occasion and go to Ripton July 3, climb Bread Loaf Mountain July 4, and be present at the meeting the next day.

Under the new regime, automobiles are welcomed at Bread Loaf Inn. The climb is made this way in 45 minutes as against three hours by team. Unless haste is necessary, it is no hardship to linger on

this, one of the most interesting mountain drives in Vermont. The route is over as fine a road as a motorist could wish through East Middlebury, trimmest of villages, which nestles under the foothills. Just east of the village, the climb through Ripton Gorge begins. The densely forested mountains tower steeply on both sides of the gorge, and the road runs through a tunnel of foliage high on the south mountain side. In the dim and shadowy depths of the gorge, 400 feet below, a murmur comes from the Middlebury river, and now and then glimpses of the little river tearing through its boulder-obstructed bed can be seen.

A rise of 700 feet in two miles makes the climb steady but the road is surprisingly good. The road is protected by a high bank on its outer edge, but this protection is in a way superfluous as the trees are so thick on the slope that the chance to fall down does not seem much better than the chance to fall up the inner slope. With the coming of automobile traffic, nothing which makes for safety is being neglected. A stout fence is being built along the brink of the gorge, the roadway widened at turns, and at necessary points, a number of turnouts have been made.

The road climbs out of its leafy tunnel to the high tableland which stretches to the main range of the Green Mountains, three miles away. Each bit of foothill country presents its own peculiarities, as the town of Lincoln just north of Ripton is a great basin hemmed in by mountains.

The village of Ripton is passed, and the road climbs toward the mountains. Two miles east, a by-road to the north leads to the Noble farm. Through pastures for half a mile the road leads to the farm which is located on about the highest point of the plateau. Bread Loaf Mountain, five miles away, fills the horizon to the north. The first sight was disappointing, for when seen before from Lincoln Mountain, the angle was such that it showed two acute peaks separated by a deep cleft. Seen now in its broadside view, it is a long ridge with a shallow saddle in the middle, the north end higher than the south. The contours are all gently rounded and it looks not unlike a long loaf of bread which had failed of its destiny in the middle and achieved it unequally at its ends. The next peak to the south in the main range is Burnt Hill, from whose bare summit commanding views may be obtained. A high ridge continues south, and the notch of the pass across the range can be located. South of the pass, Worth Mountain is identified and the mass of Mt. Moosalamoo fills in the southwest. In the northwest, South Mountain is seen and connecting these peaks is a jumble of peaks, ridges and foothills, mostly unnamed. Only three quarters of a mile below to the southeast lies Bread Loaf Inn and its cottage colony. Altogether a most delectable and promising region, and of a new type. The welcome at the Noble farm is most cordial, and the promise is favorable for good mountain weather on the morrow.

BREAD LOAF MOUNTAIN

Some Green Mountain Club members from Brandon pick up the Burlington party next morning and the car takes a road northeast from Ripton village toward Bread Loaf Mountain. The car is left at the farm of Sylvanus Bean, the last house on the road. If any wayfarers wish to break out from the Long Trail on account of bad weather or other reasons accommodation will be found at this farm. The road beyond, good enough for teams, if not for automobiles, leads through partly cleared land. The clearings showed more wild strawberries than anyone had ever seen at once. Two miles from Bean's, the old steam sawmill where the trail begins is reached. A late start was made and a fine mountain brook invites to lunch. Not a vestige remains of the sawmill, except a hole in the ground, once the cellar of a large boarding-house for its gang.

The trail strikes into the forest and continues on an easy upward slope for two miles. From here the ascent is steeper and half a mile on, the Long Trail is crossed. The Long Trail travels high on the west slope, and while not used enough to make a worn footpath, the line of "blazes" is plain. A new Green Mountain Club shelter camp has just been completed half a mile north of this intersection of the trails. This camp is on a large brook and it the best and largest of these shelter camps so far built. Green Mountain Club arrows are nailed up to make things clear and the climb resumed.

The trees become scrubbier and backward views begin to open up. The last steep hitch is climbed and the summit won, but as one is still in a thickly growth of spruce, the sensation is not the same as when one reaches the bare rocky crest of Mansfield.

There is, however, a good outlook to the west, and Lake Champlain looks at one's feet across the ridged valley. The Four Brother Islands can be counted. Just south, another clearing opens up a view to Killington Peak whose great mass blocks the horizon in this direction. Pico Peak can be identified, though Mendon and Shrewsbury Peaks remain in doubt. None in the party know the range to the south, so peaks known to lie between Bread Loaf Mountain and Killington Peak can only be guessed. The saddle between the peaks of Bread Loaf Mountain which from below looked a gentle dip, now at close quarters looks about a mile across and half a mile deep.

A "blazed" trail leads through the spruce growth, which is not over 20 feet high, to another clearing at the north of the peak. Here a complete surprise awaits, for, one after another, stand revealed Lincoln Mountain, Camel's Hump, and Mt. Mansfield, and all so near that the peculiarities of each peak are plainly visible. This is positively unique as there is no other peak in the main range from which these three giants can be seen at once. Commonly the nearest high peak shuts out those beyond, but Bread Loaf Mountain lies far enough to the east to

make possible this sweeping view of these high peaks. To the north, the Worcester range, which bounds the Stowe valley on the east, gains an unaccustomed height and prominence. Bolton Mountain can be picked out against the background of Mansfield. Up the Stowe valley, Belvidere Mountain and Mount Norris fill in the northern horizon.

This unusual viewpoint plays strange tricks in the relation of peaks. The ridge of Lincoln Mountain, with its three peaks, when seen from the west apparently follows a straight line. From Bread Loaf Mountain, the line of the ridge is so bowed that the north peak is seen between the middle and south peaks and was, at first glance, taken to be the middle peak. Crossbars have been nailed between two of the highest trees, and a climb of 15 feet opens up a view to the east, limited by haze this day as is the Adirondack view. The Mad River valley, and the White River valley lie at the eastern base of the main range. The course of the State road through the wild notch in Granville can be traced.

The four highest peaks of the Green Mountains can be seen from Bread Loaf Mountain. It is not impossible that a clear day will show Jay Peak just to the west of Belvidere Mountain, which would complete the tale of peaks over 4,000 feet high. A tower just high enough to clear the tree tops would enable one to see this unique view almost without turning. The Johnson section of the Green Mountain Club met a similar condition on the sum-

mit of Sterling Mountain by erecting a tower 20 feet high whose platform cleared the tree tops. Built by members of the scrub spruce growth at hand, its cost was literally nothing, and it has now weathered the gales of two winters. Just such a tower is needed on Bread Loaf Mountain and may possibly be built this season.

An attempt was made to measure the height of Bread Loaf Mountain by an aneroid barometer. The elevation at the starting point, at which the barometer must be set, was uncertain. The barometer read 3,900 feet, but comparison with the south peak of Lincoln Mountain, nearby, elevation 4,078 feet, convinced one that the elevation was nearer 3,800 feet. Now that the elevation at Bread Loaf Inn is definitely known (1,440 feet), a second attempt will settle the matter. The trip down was easy and uneventful, except when on arrival at the Bean farm, the party was unexpectedly and hospitably refreshed with ice cream and cake.

BREAD LOAF INN

One summer hotel is very like any other summer hotel except in the setting. If a summer hotel is fortunate enough to have a distinction of its own from some charm or quaintness in its buildings, gardens, decorations or furnishings, that inn stands out in the memory where others, less favored, remain as a composite of conventional details. Bread Loaf Inn stands out in memory sharply. Holmes said "that New England families in each

generation, where there was an accession of fortune, built an addition to the homestead always in the rear." Bread Loaf Inn began its existence in a farm house in 1865, and it would seem that a yearly addition had been made ever since, invariably on the ground floor. A labyrinth of passages of unexpected twists and turns, where the new and older buildings join, have many exits and entrances and lead to unsuspected parlors, dens and libraries. The open fireplace is found everywhere, and in the oldest building radiators show that steam heat is available when the frost begins to nip as the inn is kept open late in the fall. The business of this inn, with 200 guests, and the post-office, is carried on in a tiny office which opens on a front entry by a window. All it needs is an outfit of copper, pewter, beer pulls and bottles to transform it into a typical Dickens bar.

Connected with the house in the rear, is a large auditorium which will seat several hundred. This has a stage with all the fittings, curtain, footlights and scenery. This hall is also used as a music room. Back of this is a large smoking-room with an inviting open fireplace. And again, back of this are the bowling alleys.

Along the front to the east stretches the large, airy, and inviting dining hall. Here good food is enhanced by dainty service, as the waitresses, all in white, are, and always have been the students of Middlebury College. Now that Bread Loaf Inn is owned and carried on by the

college, possibly credits will be given in the course of household economics for this charming summer service. Back of the dining hall extends another range of buildings which were not investigated; these were the kitchen and its dependencies, the college dormitory, and quarters for the other ministers to comfort.

Outside of the entrance swings the typical signboard of olden times, and on it is painted the brownest and crustiest of loaves. The inn is the center of a cluster of cottages. Some of these are annexes of the inn, and just why they escaped being added to the ground floor plan is not quite clear. These cottages are three stories high and have piazzas about three sides to the roof. It is not uncommon for a family to take an entire floor, and while enjoying the convenience and social life of the inn have an independent home life about their own open fireplace. Eight cottages are privately owned, and have been occupied for many summers.

The inn stands on its own farm which has a rather famous herd of Jersey cattle. The gardens in front of the inn are a delight to the eye. Vegetables are raised in abundance, and a large greenhouse and grapery in the distance give promise of further luxury. No exotic gong, nor jangling bell, but the bugle, hollowed in the romance of forest and mountain, sounds the call to meals.

The quaint irregularity of the inn, with its rambling signs of growth, and the outlying cottages raised the query as to whether Stockton might not have visited

Bread Loaf Inn and used it in his story "Squirrel Inn." Architects say that a house shows the character of the man who dwells in it. The mountain and forest setting, the quaintness and irregularity of the structure, the nooks of charm, the libraries, and the general unexpectedness surely suggest its founder, the late Joseph Battell. His gift of 31,000 acres of mountain side, largely virgin forest, to Middlebury College provides the largest and most wonderful college campus in existence. Bread Loaf Inn is included in this gift, and the pleasant duty of making the beauties of the Green Mountains known to visitors will now devolve upon the college. The use of the inn as a feature of the life of the college will undoubtedly grow. At the last commencement, as part of the program, alumni day was held at Bread Loaf Inn with 400 in attendance.

The business of the annual meeting of the Green Mountain Club occupied all of the morning, but as there was a down-pour of rain at the time, there was no occasion for regrets for lost opportunity outdoors. By noon, the sun was out, and after dinner, of the several short trips at hand, the walk to Silent Cliff was chosen. Most of it was by road out into the pass and dryer, the Long Trail was crossed, and if time allowed, there was also the chance to see Pleiad Lake.

The road out to the Ripton-Hancock Pass is level for three-quarters of a mile. At the schoolhouse, where the children are assembled for a flag-raising, the road

begins to climb and soon enters the forest. The trees arch the road, making many a charming vista. Big brooks are now crossed from time to time. The town line between Ripton and Hancock is crossed and now the mountains begin to come together, and the actual notch is seen ahead. Mr. Noble, who is acting as guide, points out a ridge near the top of the southern mountain. Just over this ridge lies Pleiad Lake, 600 feet above the road, probably the highest body of water in the Green Mountains. Nearby the Long Trail turns into the road from the south. Green Mountain Club arrows marking the Long Trail and directing to Pleiad Lake and Mt. Horrid are fixed. The Long Trail follows the road east for a quarter of a mile, then turns north into the forest. More Green Mountain Club arrows are fixed. Automobile tracks of some of the party continue ahead, and as was learned later they could not resist dropping down to Hancock.

A few hundred yards up the Long Trail, a trail to the east is taken which leads up on a ridge, and continues across through the forest, the general direction being southeast. The trail dips down into a hollow, and then begins climbing another ridge. The ridge is surmounted, and the trail apparently descends on the other side. Forcing a way through the scrub spruce everyone stops with a gasp. Stopping is wise for the trail ends at a ledge on the brink of a cliff which drops sheer to the tree tops many feet below. A huge gulf burrows into the Hancock

side of the mountain from its base to the crest of the ridge. It looks half a mile across and equally deep. The sensation is that if one fell over, it would not be the base of the cliff but the bottom of the gulf which would be the landing place. As far as the eye can see there is only forest-covered mountain and valley. Not a human habitation, not a suggestion of the work of man except when across the gulf, the route of the road down to Hancock can be traced. Over all broods an immense silence. A name was never more worthily bestowed.

It is five o'clock and time for the retreat to be sounded. The route is all down hill and only three and a half miles back to the inn. A regretful look is cast upward toward Pleiad Lake in passing, but that must wait for another occasion. Back to the inn in time for a good supper, and then on board the automobile. Dropping down Ripton Gorge into the setting sun is an experience worth remembering. Middlebury is reached just as daylight ends, and, as there is nothing beyond but a train ride, this is really the end of a most interesting trip.

The Bread Loaf region is well worth a two days' trip, and as farm houses are now available for accommodation, as well as Bread Loaf Inn, all tastes and all purses may be suited. By use of the automobile, and Middlebury prices are moderate, either the climb of Bread Loaf Mountain or the trip to Pleiad Lake and Silent Cliff can be made in a day from Burlington or Rutland. With more in-

formation about the region and the trails than has been available heretofore, there will be more who will want to climb Bread Loaf Mountain, for any mountain has peculiar claims of its own, from whose summit may be seen the four highest peaks of the Green Mountains.

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